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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twenty-ninth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 769th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Monday, 27 January 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. DOEK

CONTENTS

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (continued)

Initial report of Bahrain

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 4) (continued)

Initial report of Bahrain (CRC/C/11/Add.24; CRC/C/Q/BAH/1; written replies of the Government of Bahrain to the questions in the list of issues (document without a symbol distributed in the meeting room in English only))

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Bahrain took places at the Committee table.

2. Sheikh F. AL-KHALIFA (Bahrain) said that long before signing the Convention in 1991, his Government had consistently supported and endorsed all endeavours at both international and regional levels to protect the rights of the child and the family. As explained in paragraph 78 of the initial report (CRC/C/11/Add.24), the 1973 Constitution contained numerous provisions for the protection of the family, and children in particular.

3. The Constitution had derived those principles from the Islamic Shariah, on which the family system in Bahrain was based. The best interests of the child were at the forefront when legislation was enacted. The State ensured that the government departments, institutions and facilities responsible for the care and protection of children met the standards set by the competent authority and were in line with the Convention.

4. The National Committee on Childhood, in collaboration with the Children's Department of the Public Authority for Youth and Sport and the ministries, bodies and private associations concerned, was endeavouring to make the rights of the child more widely known and heighten public awareness of the Convention and the reports on its implementation. Numerous public symposiums and radio and televised discussion groups had been organized before and after the ratification of the Convention with the participation of the public and private sectors of society in order to highlight the provisions of the Convention and compare them with the legislation in force in the country. The Government was also encouraging participation by children in conferences and symposia held in and outside Bahrain to discuss various aspects of the Convention and make it more widely known.

5. In the education sector, all educational institutes, systems and programmes were in compliance with the constitutional provisions that guaranteed rights and freedoms, including the right of disabled children to enjoy special care.

6. In the health-care sector, many programmes had been implemented, including public awareness campaigns to reduce perinatal and infant mortality, the incidence of infectious, diarrhoeal and respiratory diseases, and accidents.

7. In recent years, Bahrain had achieved tremendous progress in promoting and protecting the rights of the child as a result of the Government's political, economic and social reforms. But it was not immune to certain problems common to many societies in those fields. Thus, his delegation looked forward to a frank discussion with the Committee, whose assistance it sought to overcome obstacles to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child.

8. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to put questions to the delegation concerning general measures of implementation and the definition of the child.

9. Mr. AL-SHEDDI thanked the delegation for the additional information it had provided. He looked forward to the discussion and was convinced that Bahrain would benefit from the Committee's suggestions and recommendations.

10. He had visited Bahrain on a number of occasions and seen the progress made under the National Plan for Children. Bahrain's cooperation with various international human rights bodies showed its determination to implement its treaty obligations in full. The establishment of the Consultative Council's Human Rights Committee was another sign that Bahrain intended to make progress in that area.

11. Bahrain's initial report, which had been drawn up in accordance with the Committee's guidelines, provided a wealth of information on children and their needs. He noted, however, that it had arrived rather late.

12. Judging by paragraph 36 of the report, the Convention had the force of law, but he had not found any background information about the Convention's actual implementation in domestic law. What decisions had been taken to ensure that the provisions of the Convention were given effect and were reflected in the country's laws, rules and regulations? What possibilities were open to the National Committee on Childhood to act on the Convention's provisions? How independent was it, what staff and resources were available to it and how did it deal with complaints?

13. He would also like to know whether there was a link between the National Committee on Childhood and the Consultative Council's Human Rights Committee.

14. Disseminating the Convention was important in raising public awareness of its contents. Bahrain should make the Convention available to teachers, particularly those involved with children in schools, as well as to families, which were often unfamiliar with the rights it contained. It had been reported to the Committee that the Arabic-language version of the Convention did not include some of its provisions, and he asked the delegation to explain why.

15. Ms. SARDENBERG said that she was pleased to see a woman in the delegation, but thought that the proportion - one woman to eight men - was somewhat unbalanced. She noted that four women had recently been appointed to the Consultative Council; did those women have high-ranking positions in the Government?

16. Bahrain had ratified only three of the major human rights instruments and had not ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Did the Government intend to accede to other human rights instruments? She welcomed Bahrain's withdrawal of its reservation to article 20 of the Convention against Torture and asked whether there had been any new developments with regard to the request by the Special Rapporteur on torture to visit Bahrain.

17. Bahrain had made considerable progress in recent years in improving the economic situation of its population, and that of children in particular. In that context, she sought updated information in connection with the National Plan for Children. Which of the decisions taken in that regard were already in effect? Bahrain's 360 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) represented a very rapid change, since the country had not had any in the not-too-distant past. Had there been new legislation with regard to NGOs? What were the conditions for establishing such bodies?

18. Bahrain had a very high concentration of migrant workers; she asked about their situation and that of their children.

19. Ms. OUEDRAOGO welcomed the provisions for invoking the Convention before the courts and asked the delegation to cite an example of such a case involving children. To what extent were the best interests of the child and the general principles of the Convention respected by Shariah courts? Had there been any difficulties in that regard? Were tribal leaders involved in implementing the Convention?

20. The report did not provide any information on the training of professionals. What had been done to ensure that such persons took account of the Convention in their activities? How far had plans progressed for teaching the Convention in school? How did children participate in the decision-making process with regard to children's issues?

21. The report did not provide any information on the legal minimum age of marriage. Was there legislation prohibiting children from marrying before reaching a certain age?

22. The report referred to working groups in the Ministries of Education, Labour and Social Affairs and an inter-ministerial committee which had met to draw up the National Plan for Childhood. How did they relate to the Government's efforts to implement the Convention? How did those bodies collaborate with the National Committee on Childhood and the Consultative Council's Human Rights Committee?

23. Ms. AL-THANI said the fact that the Islamic Shariah set a minimum age for marriage did not prevent the Committee's setting a limit in line with contemporary needs. According to information she had seen, 25 per cent of women in Bahrain married under the age of 19; that was an obstacle to their education. What legal provisions set a minimum age for marriage? Religious leaders had an important role to play in ensuring that such decisions did not have an adverse impact on the persons concerned. The Committee considered the minimum age of 14 for child labour in Bahrain to be rather low. What restrictions governed working hours for children from 14 to 18 years of age?

24. With regard to the budget, Bahrain's written replies indicated that there had been a sizeable reduction in allocations for education and health care. Was that a source of concern? Was it expected that allocations for those areas would continue to decline? She noted that primary health care in Bahrain was among the best in the Gulf region.

25. It was her understanding that legislation on children in Bahrain was under review and that measures were being taken to draw up a law on children's rights, taking into account the provisions of the Convention. That would be an important step.

26. Mr. CITARELLA said he understood that the Constitution had been suspended in 1975, and that it had not yet come back into force. If that were the case, it was misleading for the Constitution to be cited in the report in connection with the protection of rights. He asked for an explanation of the discriminatory treatment of non-Bahraini citizens under the general principles of the Constitution. Since it had been stated in the report that the status of the Convention was equal to that of domestic law, he asked for details of any legal precedents involving judges who had invoked the Convention. In the Arabic version of the Convention published in Bahrain, some important parts appeared to have been deleted. Furthermore, it was stated that the principles of the Shariah should take precedence over the Convention. Those deletions and exceptions were inconsistent with the fact that Bahrain had made no formal reservations to the Convention.

27. Ms. CHUTIKUL said she would welcome further information regarding the coordination of implementation of the Convention. The delegation should describe the horizontal links between the National Committee on Childhood and government ministries, as well as the vertical links that the National Committee maintained with local authorities. She would appreciate an explanation of how the National Committee monitored activities pertaining to implementation, and how it dealt with the investigation of complaints. She enquired whether it maintained close links with the Human Rights Committee of the Consultative Council and with a recently-formed NGO, the Bahrain Human Rights Society. It would be useful to learn whether there were plans to review the achievements of the National Plan for Children, which had been developed after the World Summit for Children in 1990.

28. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ said she welcomed the positive developments in Bahrain with regard to the liberalization of the political environment and the introduction of structures for the protection of human rights. She asked the delegation to clarify whether there had been a reduction in the budgetary allocations for health and education, particularly since no figures had been provided for 2001. She would appreciate a description of organizations in the private sector which provided services such as health centres or schools for the children of migrant workers. She would be interested to learn whether those organizations were subsidized by the Government and whether they were required to meet the same standards as public sector establishments.

29. Ms. KARP said that the establishment of democracy in Bahrain needed to be accompanied by the development of a culture of human rights. Full implementation of the Convention also implied a change in attitudes towards children. The Prime Minister had stated in the booklet entitled "Child Laws and Legislation in the State of Bahrain" that "children are the future and hope for tomorrow", but according to the approach of the Convention, children were more than an investment for the future; they were present-day subjects with rights of their own. She asked to what extent children had participated in the approval of the National Plan for Children, and how they had been involved in the educational process leading to the development of an awareness of human rights. She enquired whether a separate unit had been created within the Human Rights Committee to deal with complaints from children. With regard to the Shariah,

she understood that children were treated differently according to whether the laws applied were those of the Sunni or the Shi'ite communities. In her view, general principles which related to the child's best interests should be the same for all sections of the population. She asked how differences in personal law were handled by the courts.

30. The CHAIRPERSON asked for clarification of the number of non-Bahraini nationals under the age of 18 years residing in the country. The figure provided in the written replies could not be correct, given that it exceeded the estimated total population of non-Bahraini nationals. He would be interested to learn more about the relationship between common law and the Shariah. In particular, he enquired how the Government planned to bring the Shariah, which was a largely unwritten set of general principles, into conformity with the Convention. Drawing attention to the discrepancy between the age of majority defined by the Guardianship of Property Act (21 years) and that given by the Bahraini Nationality Act (18 years), he asked whether the Government planned to harmonize legislation in that regard. Concerning the Civil Code, he failed to understand who paid for damages in cases involving offences committed by minors, given that civil proceedings could not be brought under those circumstances. He asked whether there were plans to align the minimum age for employment, which currently stood at 14 years, with the minimum age for leaving mandatory education, which was 15 years.

The meeting was suspended at 11.15 a.m. and resumed at 11.30 a.m.

31. Mr. AL-FAIHANI (Bahrain) said that women in his country had been admitted to educational establishments since the 1920s and that, consequently, many women occupied high-ranking positions in society. Besides the four women appointed to the Consultative Council, the Secretary-General of the Supreme Council of Women had been attributed a ministerial rank, which was an unprecedented step in the Gulf region. Society in his country was open and undergoing even further liberalization.

32. His Government was permanently seeking ways to enhance dialogue with United Nations bodies. It was studying the possibility of signing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, on which a decision was expected shortly, and had recently hosted visits from representatives of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and from NGOs. Given that Bahrain was a small country with limited resources, it was unreasonable to expect it to be able to prepare for visits all the time. The preparations for the visit by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention had taken as long as four years. Requests to visit should be made sparingly, and on the basis of reliable information.

33. In reply to a question concerning monitoring, he explained that the Bahrain Human Rights Society and the National Human Rights Committee both took responsibility for monitoring implementation of the Convention; while the former was an NGO, the latter had been established by the Consultative Council.

34. Sheikh F. AL-KHALIFA said that the number of women as a proportion of the workforce was higher than in other countries in the Gulf region. Over 35 per cent of government officials were women, and 29 per cent of the workforce in general. In the University of Bahrain, women outnumbered men, accounting for approximately 65 per cent of the total student population of 14,000.

35. There were basically two reasons why budget allocations to education and health had decreased. The first was privatization: the private sector was assuming many government responsibilities, while the Government provided land for schools and health centres. The other was the increase in grants that the Government received from foreign countries, particularly Kuwait, which had financed a number of building projects for health and education, and Saudi Arabia, which had provided funds for teachers' salaries.

36. Mr. AL-FAIHINI (Bahrain) stressed that the Constitution of the State of Bahrain had never been suspended, but merely two articles pertaining to Parliament. The National Action Charter now dealt with those parliamentary issues and would establish deadlines for the implementation of the democratic process.

37. Ms. AL-DOSSARY (Bahrain) referred Committee members to the written replies with regard to the background and role of the National Committee on Childhood (p. 6) and plans to incorporate the Convention into tne school curriculum (p. 7). Both the Consultative Council's Human Rights Committee and the National Committee on Childhood addressed children's issues but there was no official mechanism for coordinating their work.

38. Mr. BU HAMOOD (Bahrain) explained that if a law conflicted with the Constitution anyone could request the courts to declare it null and void. It was for the courts to apply laws that were in conformity with the Constitution and other general rules of law. Bahrain had never invoked the law on states of emergency, which was no longer in force. Parents or guardians had liability for criminal offences committed by children under 21.

39. Mr. DERBASS (Bahrain) said that the number of NGOs had increased in recent years, with a current 360 as opposed to 218 prior to the adoption of the National Action Charter. Many political and women's associations monitored developments closely, and a committee chaired by the Crown Prince and comprising representatives of civil society was reviewing law 21 on associations, the amended version of which would be submitted to the Consultative Council for adoption. Those associations received financial and human-resource assistance to enable them to play their assigned role. A coordination committee for civil action cooperated with governmental and other bodies. There was no minimum age of marriage in the Islamic Shariah, but one was soon to be established, probably at 21.

40. Ms. AL-THANI asked whether the age would be the same for girls and boys.

41. The CHAIRPERSON requested the delegation's views on the issue of a government body that coordinated the action of the various inter-ministerial commissions and the Human Rights Committee.

42. Ms. SARDENBERG asked the delegation to comment on her impression that foreigners were required to pay for a vast array of services that were free for citizens. Also, would the amended law on associations provide for the independence of NGOs?

43. Ms. KARP asked why certain articles of the Convention had been omitted from the version published by the authorities, whether there was a special unit in the Human Rights Committee dealing with children's complaints, and whether children were involved in the

democratization process. Could the delegation say what the deadline was for the transfer of the Public Prosecutor's Office from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Justice, which could have a significant impact on the juvenile justice system?

44. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ asked whether the legislation on children to be reviewed by the National Committee on Childhood was the same contained in the booklet "Child Laws and Legislation in the State of Bahrain".

45. Mr. CITARELLA asked why certain articles of the Convention had been deleted from the text published. Bahrain had entered no reservation on ratifying the Convention, but appeared to be saying that the Convention had force of law provided it did not conflict with the Shariah. Also, the country's definition did not contain a minimum age of criminal responsibility.

46. Sheik F. AL-KHALIFA said that the membership of the National Committee on Childhood included 15 members from the various ministries, which in itself afforded adequate inter-ministerial coordination. Admittedly, if the number of NGOs represented on it (currently two) were increased more feedback would be received from that quarter. Also, a centre for human rights was about to be established. In Bahrain, unlike the situation in some neighbouring countries, there was no discrimination whatsoever between citizens and non-nationals with regard to health and education services.

47. Regarding the training of professionals in the Convention, the Ministry of Education had recently announced that human rights would be taught as part of the school curriculum from 2003. The minister had granted the request of the National Committee on Childhood to set up a workshop to train prospective teachers. A conference attended by some 400 children and broadcast on Bahrain television had allowed the children to raise issues of concern to them and had made recommendations, which would be followed up in the near future.

48. Ms. KARP asked whether the delegation could elaborate on the topics raised by the children as priorities and describe how the authorities were addressing them.

49. Ms. AL-DOSSARY said that, surprisingly, war had emerged as the main topic, even though Bahrain was not a conflict zone. Accordingly, a live television programme would be aired in April 2002, with children's input, to find solutions to war problems. She had been impressed by the fact that many children had suggested that dialogue was the most effective solution.

50. Sheikh F. AL-KHALIFA said that, at the Prime Minister's behest, the procedure for the transfer of the office of the public prosecutor to the Ministry of Justice was under way.

51. Mr. BU HAMOOD said that events had outstripped the authorities' plans. The Consultative Council needed to discuss the draft for the transfer before the amendment could be introduced in the legislation. Since the Public Prosecutors' Office would need qualified staff, persons with the required skill were being sent for further training, following which the law would make provision for the transfer to the Ministry of Justice.

52. Mr. AL-FAIHANI said that the omission of certain articles of the Convention had been an oversight. With fewer than 1 million inhabitants, Bahrain lacked the necessary human resources for preparing reports, a fact that the Committee should take into account with regard to the present report and future ones. Replying to a question by Ms. Karp, he said that religious scholars played an important role in children's education and were firmly opposed to extremism. The Human Rights Committee dealt with all complaints, including those from children. It had dealt with some 600 cases in the last nine months of 2001, but no statistics on children's complaints were available.

53. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether he was right in believing that there was no special child complaints unit and that all complaints were handled by the Human Rights Committee.

54. Ms. AL-DOSSARY said that was so, but that consideration would be given to the establishment of a special unit.

55. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether the National Committee on Childhood might perform that task.

56. Sheikh F. AL-KHALIFA said that members of the National Committee on Childhood raised issues relating to children and later transmitted them to the pertinent ministries. However, no ministry dealt with children alone.

57. Mr. AL-FAIHANI (Bahrain) said that a unit in the Ministry of Health also dealt with child-health and child-abuse issues.

58. The CHAIRPERSON said that the status of the Convention under the legal system of Bahrain needed to be clarified. According to the State party the Convention had become part of Bahraini law and its provisions were binding; did the Islamic Shariah prevail in cases of conflict between the domestic legal order and the Convention?

59. Mr. AL-FAIHANI (Bahrain) said that there was no contradiction between the provisions of the Convention and the Islamic Shariah; both were designed to promote and protect the rights of the child.

60. Ms. KARP said that the Islamic Shariah was open to interpretation, which meant that it did not always comply with the provisions of the Convention; she expressed particular concern about the rights of children born out of wedlock, inheritance rights and the different treatment of boys and girls. The State party should indicate how it intended to ensure that all interpretations of the Shariah were in conformity with the Convention.

61. Mr. CITARELLA said that various articles had been omitted when the Convention had been disseminated. The State party's views on adoption were one area of conflict between the Islamic Shariah and the Convention.

62. Mr. AL-FAIHANI (Bahrain) said that under the Shariah children enjoyed better inheritance rights than those provided under many other legal systems. The State party could not lose itself in conjectures about how individuals might interpret the law. For example, the recent bout of suicide attacks in other countries of the world was a result of one interpretation of Islamic law; that did not mean that the interpretation was acceptable.

63. Sheikh F. AL-KALIFHA (Bahrain) said that there was no Shariah court per se in Bahrain. A Constitutional Court would be established to act as the highest judicial authority.

64. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to ask questions concerning general principles, civil rights and freedoms and family environment and alternative care.

65. Mr. AL-SHEDDI requested further information about the role of the National Committee on Childhood. The State party should indicate what measures had been taken by the Committee since its establishment in 1990. Further details should be provided about the rights enjoyed by non-Bahrainis, given that they accounted for approximately one third of the population. For example, while paragraph 75 of the State party's initial report revealed that the State respected and guaranteed the rights of every child without any form of discrimination, it also stated that 17 of the 39 private schools in Bahrain were for foreigners, suggesting that foreign children were unable to attend the same schools as Bahraini children. He expressed concern that while children were not prohibited from expressing their point of view, traditionally children were not given the opportunity to voice their opinions within the family. It would be interesting to learn whether the National Committee on Childhood had launched any awareness-raising campaigns to encourage families to listen to their children.

66. The issue of child abuse needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency. As in other Arab States, child abuse occurred because people were not sufficiently educated about its negative effects. Paragraph 176 of the initial report made reference to the Child Protection Committee formed by the Ministry of Health to formulate a plan for the protection of children. He asked why the Ministry of Health was specifically responsible for addressing the problem of child abuse, as many cases of domestic violence were not brought to the attention of the health-care sector. What was being done to address cases of "hidden" violence? The State party should provide specific data on the issue, and indicate any measures taken by the National Committee on Childhood or other bodies to remedy the problem. What procedures were followed if a doctor reported a case of child abuse, for example?

67. Ms. SARDENBERG commended the State party for the positive steps it had taken to implement the Convention. She welcomed the efforts made to recruit more women to high-profile posts and encouraged the Government to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

68. She stressed the importance of disseminating the Convention in its entirety. It had to be seen as a comprehensive document reflecting consistency in the development of ideas and rights. She welcomed the fact that a Bahraini newspaper had reported that the State party was sending a delegation to the Committee meeting; the press was an important tool that should be used to raise awareness of the Convention. While the State party had sufficient financial resources at its

disposal and could count on the support of United Nations agencies and international cooperation, there were clearly some shortcomings in the sphere of human resources. More effort should be made to disseminate the Convention to all professionals working with children.

69. The State party should indicate whether the General Organization for Youth and Sports was an NGO. What exactly was its mandate? It would be interesting to learn how the organization worked with other bodies addressing children's issues. A document provided to the Committee by the State party entitled "Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the State of Bahrain" revealed that the Government "sponsored" orphans and divorced and widowed women. Could the State party explain what that entailed? In the section of the initial report referring to general principles, the State party had focused on legal decisions rather than practical issues. It should indicate whether the Passports Act of 1975, which stipulated that a married woman could not be granted a passport without her husband's consent, was still in force. On the issue of education, she failed to understand why certain vocational courses provided at secondary level, such as hotel management and agriculture, were available only to boys, while others, such as graphic design and dressmaking, were available only to girls.

70. The Code of School Discipline, mentioned in paragraph 117 of the initial report, had been designed to develop a sense of responsibility among schoolchildren, preserve their dignity, safeguard their rights, ensure justice and equality in disciplinary measures and prohibit beatings and corporal punishment in all schools. Pupils were also given the opportunity to lodge complaints. Could the State party indicate how the Code had been put into practice and whether it had been evaluated?

71. Ms. AL-THANI said that one of the recommendations made at a recent congress organized by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on child abuse in the Gulf States was that all States should, as a matter of priority, conduct a comprehensive study into child abuse. It would be useful to learn whether Bahrain had participated in the congress, and whether any steps had been taken to conduct a study on child abuse. It would be interesting to learn whether sexual violence was taken into account as well as physical violence.

72. Further information was needed about the Kafala system, or fosterage, which was the Islamic alternative to adoption. The State party should indicate whether there was a monitoring mechanism to ensure that fostered children were not abused. The rules governing nationality were unclear, particularly regarding children born to non-Bahraini fathers. It would also be interesting to learn more about the situation of the 200 stateless families, known as the Bidoon. Had they been granted Bahraini nationality? The report revealed that the Shariah courts were subdivided into Sunni and Jaafari branches and were competent to hear personal status disputes relating, inter alia, to marriage, divorce, inheritance and child custody. Further information should be provided about the two different systems, which did not always take the best interests of the child into account.

73. Mr. CITARELLA expressed concern that under article 18 of the Constitution, only citizens of Bahrain were seen as equal before the law. What protection was provided for non-citizens? He said that while social services used to be provided free of charge to all people

living in Bahrain, to the best of his knowledge non-nationals were now sometimes required to pay a special fee for health and education services. Could the State party confirm that? It would be interesting to know what measures were being taken to change traditional attitudes regarding the early age of marriage for girls.

74. Ms. OUEDRAOGO said that professional training about the provisions of the Convention should be provided not only to teachers but to all other professionals working with children, such as social workers and members of the police force. She asked what steps had to be taken to register the birth of a child born out of wedlock, and what legislation was in place to protect the rights of such a child. With regard to the section of the report on non-discrimination, she pointed out that no mention had been made of people with disabilities. The initial report revealed that consideration had been given to the introduction of fosterage procedures, under which non-Bahrainis would not be able to foster children from inside the State but would be provided with assistance to adopt children from abroad, after a study of the family's circumstances had been conducted. It would be interesting to learn more about the issue. For example, what were the guidelines for that type of adoption and was there a monitoring mechanism in place?

75. Ms. KARP asked whether any training would be provided for professionals working in the field of juvenile law. While she welcomed the fact that the State party had withdrawn its reservation to article 20 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, she expressed concern that the reports of the Special Rapporteur on Torture indicated that the torture of children continued to take place. Furthermore, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention had indicated that children were kept in arbitrary detention. She acknowledged that the Government was endeavouring to improve the current situation; examples should be provided of practical measures taken to bring perpetrators of abuse to justice. Had the State party considered establishing a police monitoring body, for example? Lastly, she asked whether any mechanisms had been set up to help child victims of abuse.

76. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ cited the written replies to the effect that while no specific budget was provided from the Ministry of the Interior for child protection, the Ministry was open to meeting all of the child protection costs of institutions responsible for child welfare, crime prevention and rehabilitation. As far as she understood, child welfare and rehabilitation came under the mandate of other ministries. Could the State party clarify the matter?

77. The CHAIRPERSON asked who was responsible for placing children in the Child Welfare Centre mentioned in the initial report. Was the centre open to non-Bahraini children? On the issue of fosterage, he asked why non-Bahraini families were not permitted to foster children under the Kafala system. Lastly, he asked for details about the effectiveness of measures put in place to recover child maintenance following a divorce.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.